



Land Stewardship *Annual Report, 2002*



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Online Information

For more information and Save Our Rivers general maps, please visit the South Florida Water Management District's Land Stewardship web site at www.sfwmd.gov. Click on "Recreation."

Land Managers: The Ultimate "multi-taskers"

Pam Mac'Kie, Deputy Executive Director, Land and West Coast Resources

At home, we always find things that need to be cleaned, repaired and maintained. We perpetually try to keep up with our "to do list." Imagine the "to do list" for 360,000 acres of public lands.

This is the challenge our land managers face. They work closely with their assigned lands to document and tackle what needs to be done...and they work hard to protect the public's investment, just as we work hard to maintain our own personal property. They are out in the field many times each week and, through their familiarity, they develop an intimate knowledge about the management needs. A prescribed burn is needed here, exotic vegetation control there, and better public access routes over there.

Our land managers are ever the "multi-taskers." While surveying eagle nests from the helicopter, they may notice a road needs repair. While "on the ground" supervising the work of exotic plant control contractors, they observe a sign that needs to be re-posted. Part and parcel of these efforts is the "back at the office" administrative work they do to document their field work. Our land managers constantly strive to make the most of their time to balance what is being done with what needs to get done.

Land management can be physically rigorous and challenging work. All too commonly when conditions are right, they might work a 14-hour day, or longer, managing a prescribed burn, in hot suits surrounded by smoke and fire all day. Or they may need to walk into a flooded cypress dome to check the growth of exotic vegetation because it cannot be seen readily from the air or road.

Just as we need the proper equipment at home to do our chores, our land managers do, too. From road graders to vegetation choppers to fire wagons, the land manager pre-plans, plans, post-plans, coordinates, secures, supervises, operates, services and evaluates the equipment and its use.

Are our land managers "Jacks of all trade and masters of none?" "No!" While all of our land managers are versatile because the nature of their job demands it, all of these efforts take special training and expertise. Our land managers hold special certificates in prescribed burning and natural areas management. This, along with improved coordination with other agencies, has greatly increased our efficiency and effectiveness. In 2002, our team of highly skilled and qualified land managers and land management technicians burned 16,500 acres as opposed to 4,000 in 1995—more than a four-fold increase. While this activity is highly weather dependent, this is a significant trend.

As we look ahead, we must remain intimately familiar with the needs of the land. The amount of public land slated to come under our wing will increase. Our land managers will continue to dedicate themselves to the land to restore it, maintain it, protect it and manage it. The land is the public's investment in our future and it is our job to protect that investment.



Land Stewardship Report

Background & History

The Save Our Rivers (SOR) program began in 1981 with the legislative enactment of the Water Management Lands Trust Fund, Chapter 373.59, F.S., which enabled the five water management districts to buy lands needed for water management, water supply, and the conservation and protection of water resources, and to make them available for appropriate public use. Since that time South Florida Water Management District has purchased 361,000 acres of environmentally sensitive land (not including 800,000 ac. in the three water conservation areas). Water resource projects, or those lands associated with the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Project, consisting largely of impacted agricultural lands, have added another 153,000 acres.

Land Stewardship Program Operational Structure

The Land Stewardship Program is responsible for the planning and management of SOR lands and the implementation and administration of mitigation banks and regional offsite mitigation areas. The program has direct management responsibility for 172,000 acres in 13 projects, including two mitigation banks and several regional mitigation areas. For the 190,000 acres of non-District-managed lands, agreements or leases have been entered into with other agencies or local governments.

The major goals of the program are to restore the lands to their natural state and condition, manage them in an environmentally acceptable manner, and to provide public recreational opportunities that are compatible with natural resources protection. The program is implemented by a professional staff of 34 based in five service centers and at District headquarters in West Palm Beach.

Land Stewardship Program Program Objectives

- Complete/update management plans for all projects
- Control invasive exotics
- Restore natural fire regime
- Restore native communities
- Employ multiple use practices
- Open lands for appropriate public use

Program Finances

Since its inception in the early 1980s, the Land Stewardship Program has been funded by a variety of sources. District ad valorem taxes have not been utilized for management since 1989.

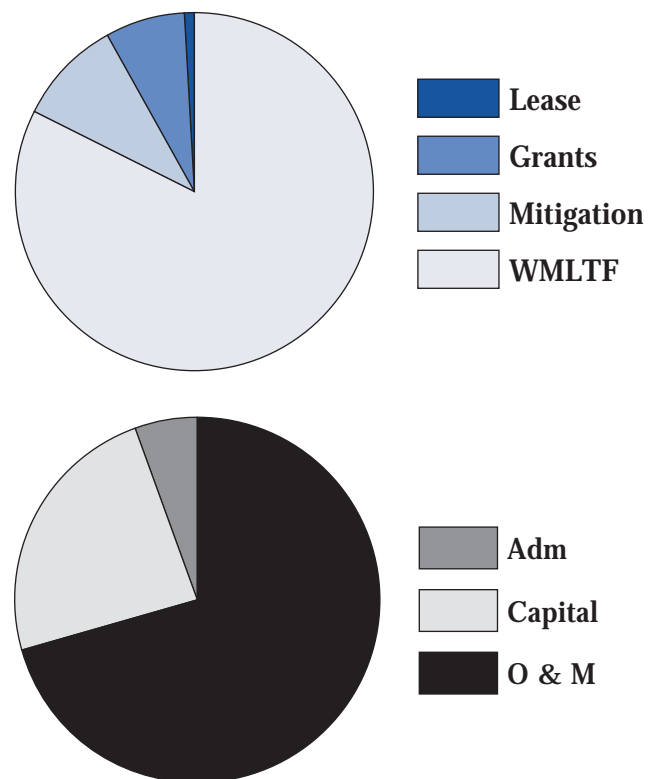
The principal source of management funding has been the Water Management Lands Trust Fund, which utilizes a portion of the State's documentary tax revenue to pay for land management activities. The fund reimburses actual expenditures based on quarterly invoices to the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, which administers the fund. Appropriate

expenditures are identified in the District's annual budget and approved by the Governing Board by a resolution to DEP. Since 2000, use of these funds has been limited to land management costs or to retire the District's land acquisition bonds.

Other funding sources include off-site mitigation, lease revenues, and grants. Off-site mitigation funds are collected as a result of conditions placed on Environmental Resource Management Permits approved by the Governing Board for authorized Regional Off-site Mitigation Areas (ROMAs). These funds must be spent strictly in accordance with the permit requirements for land acquisition, restoration, and general maintenance of lands within the ROMA. Land Stewardship Program staff obtained several grants to fund specific restoration projects on District lands. Low intensity cattle leases generate modest lease revenues, but may also require substantial in-kind services from the lessee. Additional in-kind services are provided by state and local governments, as well as numerous recreational groups and individual volunteers.

Actual and projected expenditures and revenue for FY 02 and 03 are summarized below. A common measure of land management programs is the annual cost per acre. In FY 02, the District's annual operation and maintenance cost was about \$11.00/acre. Although individual project management costs vary considerably due to site specific needs, the District's average is very typical of most public land management programs.

Land Stewardship
FY 02 Program Finances



Operation and Maintenance of Land Resources

Chapter 373.59, the originating legislation of the Save Our Rivers program, states that lands acquired through this program “shall be managed and maintained in an environmentally acceptable manner and, to the extent practicable, in such a way as to restore and protect their natural state and condition.” Major components of the Land Stewardship Program include:

Hydrologic/Habitat Restoration

A major thrust of the Land Stewardship Program is to protect and restore the flowways, watersheds, and wetlands, all of which are critical to the water resources of the District. Hydrologic restoration has been accomplished on numerous SOR projects, which range from installing earthen ditch plugs to rehydrate isolated wetlands, to constructing at-grade road crossings to restore sheetflow, to constructing levees and water control structures to reflood former Everglades marsh. Upland restoration efforts include timber thinning and chopping for the planned reintroduction of endangered red-cockaded woodpeckers, pine plantings to return pasture to pine flatwoods, and creation of hardwood hammock and forested wetlands in the southern Everglades.



Shredded saw palmetto



Pine seedling growth after prescribed burning



Overgrown saw palmetto

Exotic Plant Control

The District is committed to reducing the proliferation of exotic plant infestations and eradicating the problem where possible. Exotic control consists of the proper application of various environmentally acceptable chemical herbicides combined with mechanical techniques performed by staff or private contractors. Cooperators who manage District lands under contract or lease are strongly encouraged to apply a similarly aggressive approach to exotic plant control. Exotic control is consistently the single largest item in the Land Stewardship Program annual budget.



Aerial treatment



Contractors treat exotic plants



Open landscape post shredding and prescribed burn

Prescribed Burning

Periodic fire is a natural element of native Florida ecosystems. The District uses prescribed burning to reduce hazardous buildup of vegetative fuel loads, enhance wildlife habitat, and encourage restoration of native plant communities. The District burns its lands to simulate natural fire cycles for native plant communities. In addition, the District has initiated growing season burning to mimic the natural occurrence of lightning season fires. The fire management program is based on ecological research and proven safety standards and requires trained and experienced staff familiar with the diverse and unique fire management needs of the Florida landscape.



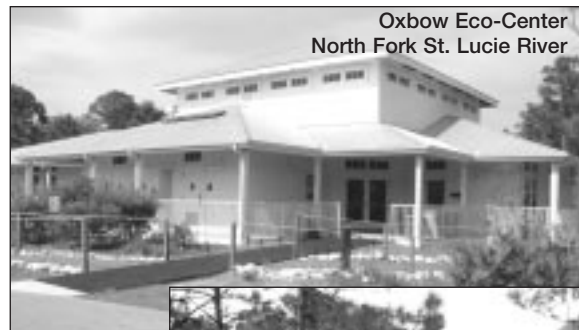
Land manager uses drip torch



Aerial prescribed burn

Public Use & Environmental Education

The District encourages use of its lands for appropriate outdoor recreational activities. All SOR lands are available for public use, except in rare instances where there is no legal public access or where lease restrictions prohibit the public. The vast majority are managed as semi-wilderness areas, with very limited vehicular access other than off-road parking. Opportunities include hiking, primitive camping, canoeing, fishing, and horseback riding, with volunteers from various user groups maintaining the trails and wilderness campsites. Cooperative agreements with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission enable high quality, low impact hunting on nearly 180,000 acres. Acquisition and management partners from several counties have constructed environmental education centers, boardwalks, and interpretive trails, all at no cost to the District, that are used by thousands of school children and adults annually.



Oxbow Eco-Center
North Fork St. Lucie River



Horseback riders, DuPuis

Mitigation

Under Chapter 373, (F.S.), the District is authorized to participate in and encourage the development of private and public mitigation banks and regional offsite mitigation areas. Furthermore, the State's mitigation banking rule, Chapter 62-342, encouraged each water management district to establish two mitigation banks. The use of mitigation and mitigation banking offers opportunities to supplement funding of the District's land acquisition, restoration, and management programs.

SFWMD's mitigation bank sites include the Loxahatchee Mitigation Bank in Palm Beach County and the Corkscrew Regional Mitigation Bank in Lee County. The District is developing each bank in a public-private contractual agreement. Private bankers obtain permits, restore the land, reimburse the District for its land acquisition and staff costs, then generate a revenue stream for future projects. As of late 2002 the Loxahatchee Mitigation Bank has completed the construction phase and the Corkscrew Regional Mitigation Bank is in the final permitting phase.

In 2000 the District Governing Board approved the use of five projects for regional mitigation activities. Three are currently being used as expenditure sites for mitigation funding, including Pennsuco in Miami-Dade County, Corkscrew Regional Ecosystem Watershed (CREW) in Lee and Collier counties, and Shingle Creek in Orange and Osceola counties. Mitigation funds are used within project areas to acquire land, treat exotic vegetation, conduct prescribed burning, and perform hydrologic improvements.



Mitigation funds were used to re-establish sheet flow,
Shingle Creek

Save Our Rivers Project Summaries

The project summary section provides a brief description of each Save Our Rivers project, organized by land management region, including maps of the five management regions. Tables on pages 18-19 describe the funding and staffing levels, management status, and public use opportunities.

UPPER LAKES LAND MANAGEMENT REGION

Orlando Service Center

Kissimmee Chain of Lakes (District managed)

County: Osceola/Polk
Project size: 33,919 ac.
District ownership: 27,844
Acquisition partners: None

A management plan for the Chain of Lakes was completed in April 2003. Acquisition of the Kissimmee Chain of Lakes project was designed to provide the capacity to store and flow water up to the 54 foot National Geodetic Vertical Datum (NGVD) contour line. Public access to most of the land is by boat. Resource management goals for the Chain of Lakes are to maintain and, where possible, restore natural communities, provide cost effective resource protection, and provide opportunities for compatible public use. In FY 02 5,200 acres were treated for exotic plants. Staff also roller chopped 300 acres of dense wax myrtles to improve the conditions of the wet prairie communities on Gardner-Cobb Marsh. There are several cattle leases and grazing reservations within the KCOL Management Area.

Lake Marion Creek (District managed)

County: Polk
Project size: 17,300 ac.
District ownership: 10,500
Acquisition partners: Polk Co., SWFWMD, USFWS

The Lake Marion Creek Management Plan was implemented in 1999. Primary stewardship activities, which are consistent with the management plan, include prescribed burning, exotic plant control, resource protection, and public use. FWC participates as a cooperative management partner by conducting a hunt program and security patrols. The area is managed as a Type 1 Wildlife Management Area. The majority of the property is open for hiking year-round and camping is available by Special Use License.

Lake Walk-in-Water (managed by Polk Co.)

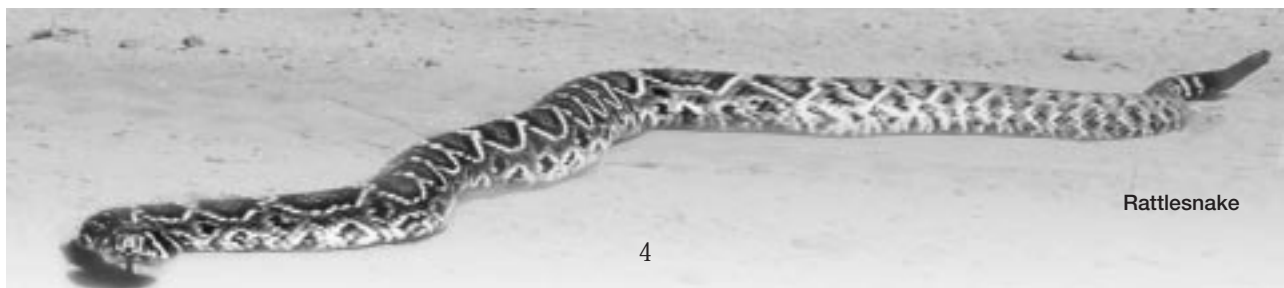
County: Polk
Project size: 4,652 ac.
District ownership: 4,109
Acquisition partners: Polk Co.

Polk County participated as a 50% acquisition partner under its Environmental Lands Program, and the county is also lead manager. A five year management plan was prepared by the county and approved by SWFWMD. It is being managed as the Sumica Natural Area after the historic logging town that existed on the site in the 1920s. In 2002 the county treated 45 acres of exotics and burned 346 acres. Current public uses include hiking and primitive camping. Future plans include hunting and horseback riding.

Reedy Creek (District managed)

County: Osceola
Project size: 30,000 ac.
District ownership: 4,800
Acquisition partners: None

For management purposes the project is divided into Upper and Lower Reedy Creek. The Upper Reedy Creek Management Area includes those lands north of Pleasant Hill Road and is approximately 4,800 acres. The Lower Reedy Creek Management Area encompasses approximately seven miles of creek corridor and totals 5600 acres under District ownership. Management goals for both areas are to conserve and protect water resources and supplies, protect and restore the land in its natural state and condition, and provide compatible public use opportunities. The Lake Russell Management Unit in Poinciana is jointly managed by Osceola County Schools as an environmental education facility. A center with classrooms and displays which provides interpretation to the scrub, Lake Russell, and floodplain swamp communities that exist on site. An interpretive hiking trail describes the unique plant communities and wildlife that exist in the scrub habitat of the site. District staff burned 9,300 acres in 2002 and more than 10,000 acres were treated for control of exotic vegetation. The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission has identified the area of Lower Reedy Creek as a "Strategic Habitat Conservation Area," a "Biodiversity Hotspot," and a "Priority Wetland for Listed Species." These designations make the area a priority for preservation based on known occurrences of rare or listed species. District staff assisted its contractor in tracking and identifying nighttime resting and foraging sites of the southeastern big-eared bat. There are several cattle leases and grazing reservations within the Reedy Creek Management Area.



Rattlesnake

Shingle Creek (District managed)

County: Orange/Osceola

Project size: 7,655 ac.

District ownership: 1,500

Acquisition partners: Mitigation

The District has undertaken several successful restoration projects within Shingle Creek Swamp funded as mitigation to offset wetland impacts associated with construction of the Orlando Beltway. A management plan was completed in 1997 and is currently being updated. Exotics are being treated and prescribed burning has been done. Since acquisition first began we have been hampered by a lack of public access. The Marriott development in the northwest corner of the project has constructed a parking area and boardwalk/trail that leads to District-owned lands. Construction of a boardwalk to connect the Marriott boardwalk with other District lands is planned for 2004. In 2003 the developers of the Hunters Creek residential community granted the District a public access easement through its property that will provide parking and a pedestrian walkway to connect with District-owned property.



KISSIMMEE/OKEECHOBEE LAND MANAGEMENT REGION

Okeechobee Service Center

Kissimmee Prairie Ecosystem (managed by Department of Environmental Protection)

County: Okeechobee

Project size: 45,631 ac.

District ownership: 38,284

Acquisition partners: CARL

The project is managed by DEP Division of Recreation and Parks under lease from the District and State and is known as Kissimmee Prairie Preserve State Park. A State-approved management plan is in place that addresses prescribed burning, exotic control, and public use. Recreational uses include hiking, bicycling, camping, and horseback riding. SFWMD obtained a federal grant to restore hydrology to a major slough on the property, and Kissimmee River restoration has been completed along the western boundary.

Tibet Butler Preserve (managed by Orange Co.)

County: Orange

Project size: 439 ac.

District ownership: 439

Acquisition partners: None

The Preserve covers 439 acres along the southwest shore of Lake Tibet Butler in Orange County. Vegetative communities include bay swamp, pine flatwoods, cypress swamp, and smaller areas of xeric oak and freshwater marsh. The Tibet Butler Preserve site includes approximately 4,000 feet of shoreline on Lake Tibet.

Orange County Parks and Recreation Department manages Tibet Butler Preserve as an environmental education facility. The property is open for public use. A large enclosed education center with classrooms was constructed in 1994. It has a full-time staff, which conducts programs for thousands of students each year. Land managers also treat exotic vegetation and maintain the system of hiking trails and boardwalks that lead to the many community types on the property. Limited prescribed burning has been done due to the small size of the site and close proximity to roads and urban development.

Kissimmee River (District managed)

County: Osceola/Polk/Highlands/Okeechobee

Project size: 62,628 ac.

District ownership: 52,000

Acquisition partners: None

The District shares management responsibility with FWC in Pools A, C, D, E, and Paradise Run. Management activities in Pools C & D are interim in nature until river restoration is complete. A management plan for Pools C & D was recently completed. Exotic plant control and prescribed burning take place above the 100-year flood line on all District lands. Below the flood line District-owned marshes along the river are open to airboating and are included in FWC's Kissimmee River Public Use Area, which is open to hunting under FWC regulations. Recently completed river restoration efforts in Pools B & C will provide excellent opportunities for canoeing, fishing, and overnight camping on District-owned lands along the river. The 7,000+ acre KICCO tract in Pool A is open for equestrian and bicycle use, and contains a well-used stretch of the Florida National Scenic Trail. Logging under a timber management plan is underway on 600+ acres at the north end of KICCO. In FY 02 650 acres were prescribed burned and 3,000 acres were treated for control of exotic vegetation. There are several cattle leases and grazing reservations within the Kissimmee River Management Area.



Paradise Run (District managed)

County: Glades

Project size: 4,265 ac.

District ownership: 1,673

Acquisition partners: None

The project lies west of Canal-38, between Structure-65 E and Lake Okeechobee. Unlike the other pools of the Kissimmee River, Level II backfilling (river restoration) will not reflood Paradise Run, since it is controlled by the stage in Lake Okeechobee. Remnant river oxbows are still present, although the surrounding land has been drained and is now improved pasture. Paradise Run is open for public use, including hunting, under FWC's Public Use Area concept. There are two cattle leases in Paradise Run.

EAST COAST LAND MANAGEMENT REGION

West Palm Beach/DuPuis

Allapattah Flats (District managed)

County: Martin

Project size: 22,560 ac.

District ownership: 20,485 ac.

Acquisition partners: Martin Co., Federal govt.

The property was purchased in 2002 as part of the Indian River Lagoon Initiative of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Project (CERP), with funding assistance from Martin Co. and the federal government. It is proposed that the ditches and swales that were excavated to drain and improve the property for cattle grazing will be plugged and filled, and the ranch's extensive wetlands allowed to reflood. Restoration will be funded through the Natural Resources Conservation Service's Wetland Reserve Program. Flood attenuation and water quality improvement are the expected outcomes from the project. Final determination of the lead managing agency is yet to be determined, but the District will be lead manager in the interim. A management plan is under development that will address exotic vegetation control, prescribed burning, and public use. A hydrologic and habitat restoration plan will be developed as a separate document. Upon termination of a hunting lease in August 2003 it is anticipated that portions of Allapattah not undergoing restoration will be opened for limited public uses, such as hiking, wilderness camping, and horseback riding. A grazing lease is currently in place.

Atlantic Ridge Ecosystem (managed by Department of Environmental Protection)

County: Martin

Project size: 13,122 ac.

District ownership: 5,974 ac.

Acquisition partners: CARL

Atlantic Ridge is being managed by DEP, Division of Recreation and Parks, under a joint management lease from SFWMD and the Division of State Lands. The area will be known as Atlantic Ridge Preserve State Park. A management plan is near completion that outlines the goals and objectives for the park. The plan describes hydrologic restoration and staffing needs, plans for exotic control and prescribed burning, and a public use program. It is proposed that initial public facilities use will include an interpretive kiosk, trailhead and hiking trails, camping, and equestrian trails with an on site stable and paddocks. The property is not open due to public access problems that are being addressed by the State. The management lease has been modified to remove the lands along the west bank of the South Fork St. Lucie River from state responsibility and turn them over to Martin County for management.



Middle school students plant an interpretive wetland

DuPuis Management Area (District managed)

County: Palm Beach/Martin

Project size: 21,875 ac.

District ownership: 21,875

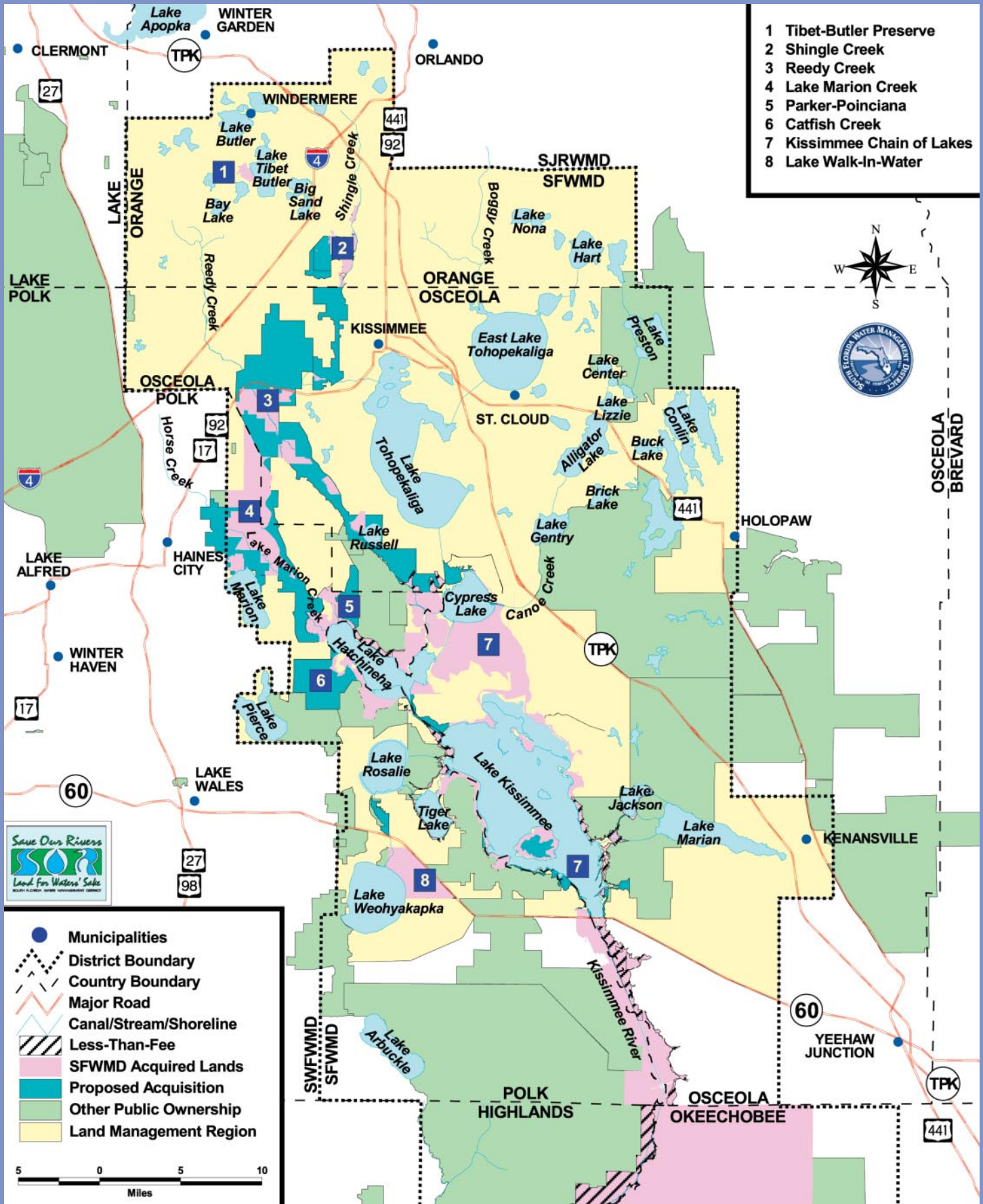
Acquisition partners: None

The five year management plan is being updated and will be complete in late FY 03. SFWMD and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) jointly manage DuPuis. Stewardship activities include prescribed burning, exotic plant control, and a forest management program to reintroduce red-cockaded woodpeckers. In FY 02 3,400 acres were burned and 4,100 acres were chemically treated for exotic plants. An extensive public use program at DuPuis that attracts thousands of visitors annually includes hunting, fishing, equestrian trails, hiking, and camping. An environmental education facility at the DuPuis headquarters building that includes indoor displays and an interpretive trail opened in April 2003.

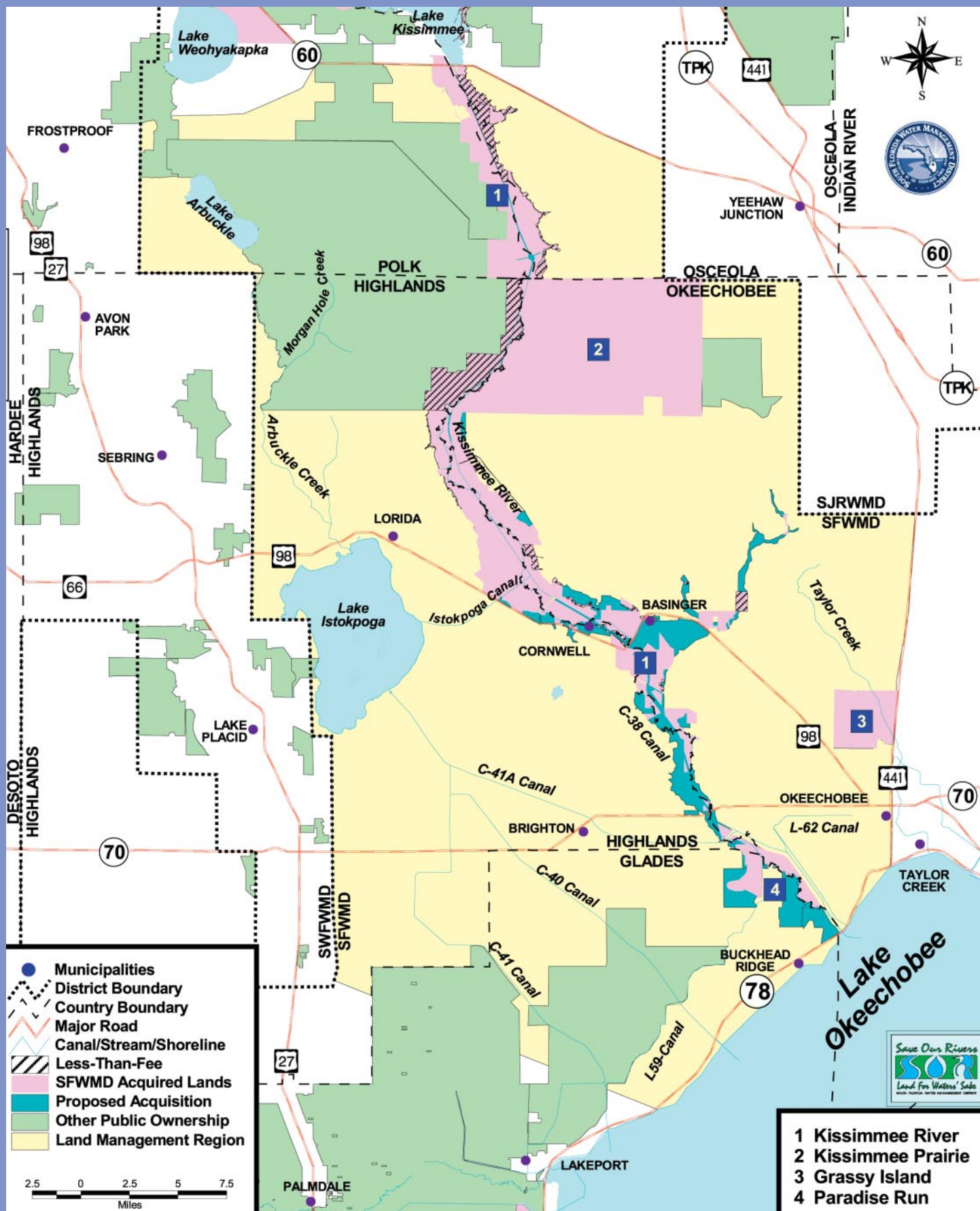
Project Maps



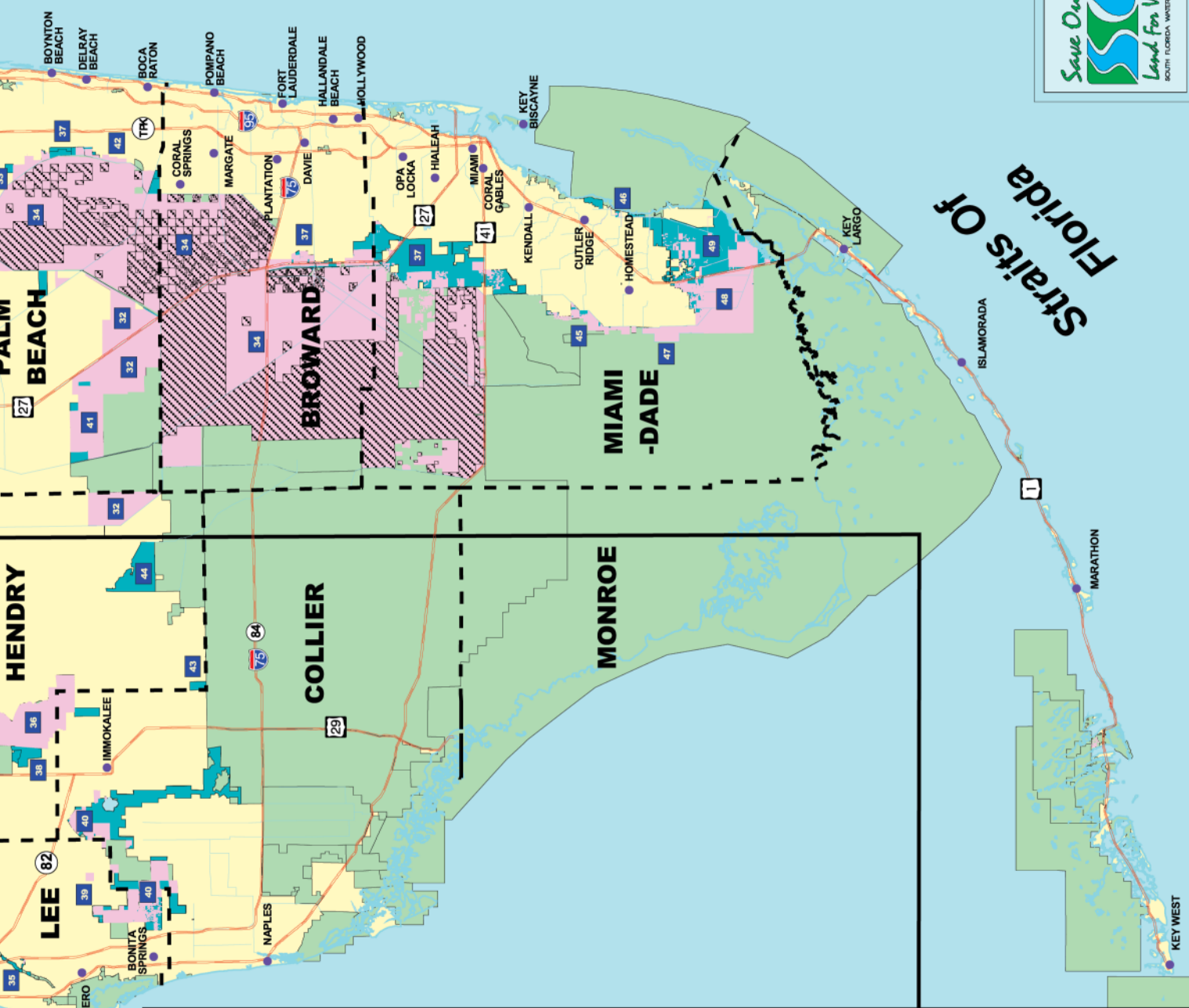
Upper Lakes Land Management Region



Kissimmee/Okeechobee Land Management Region



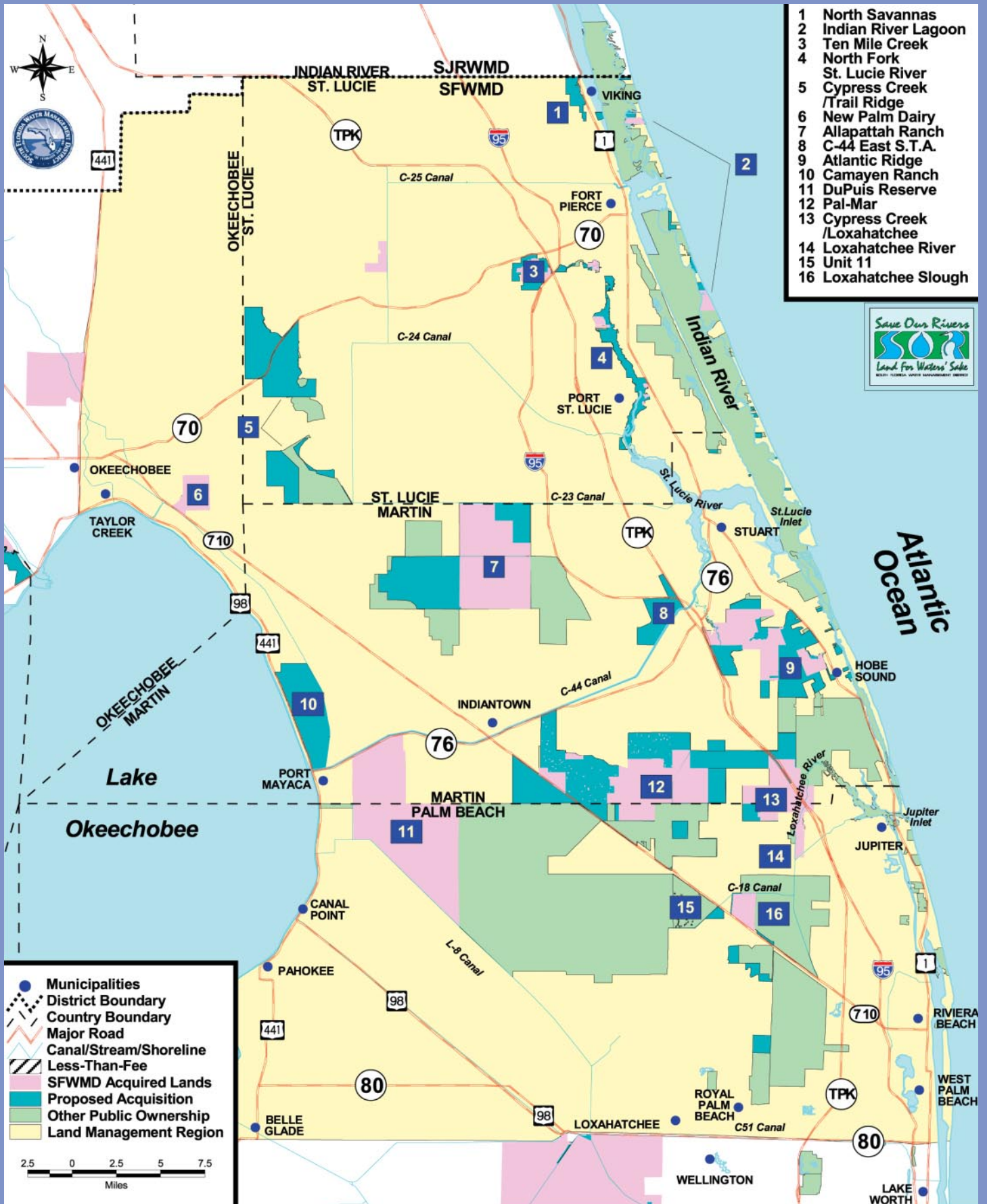
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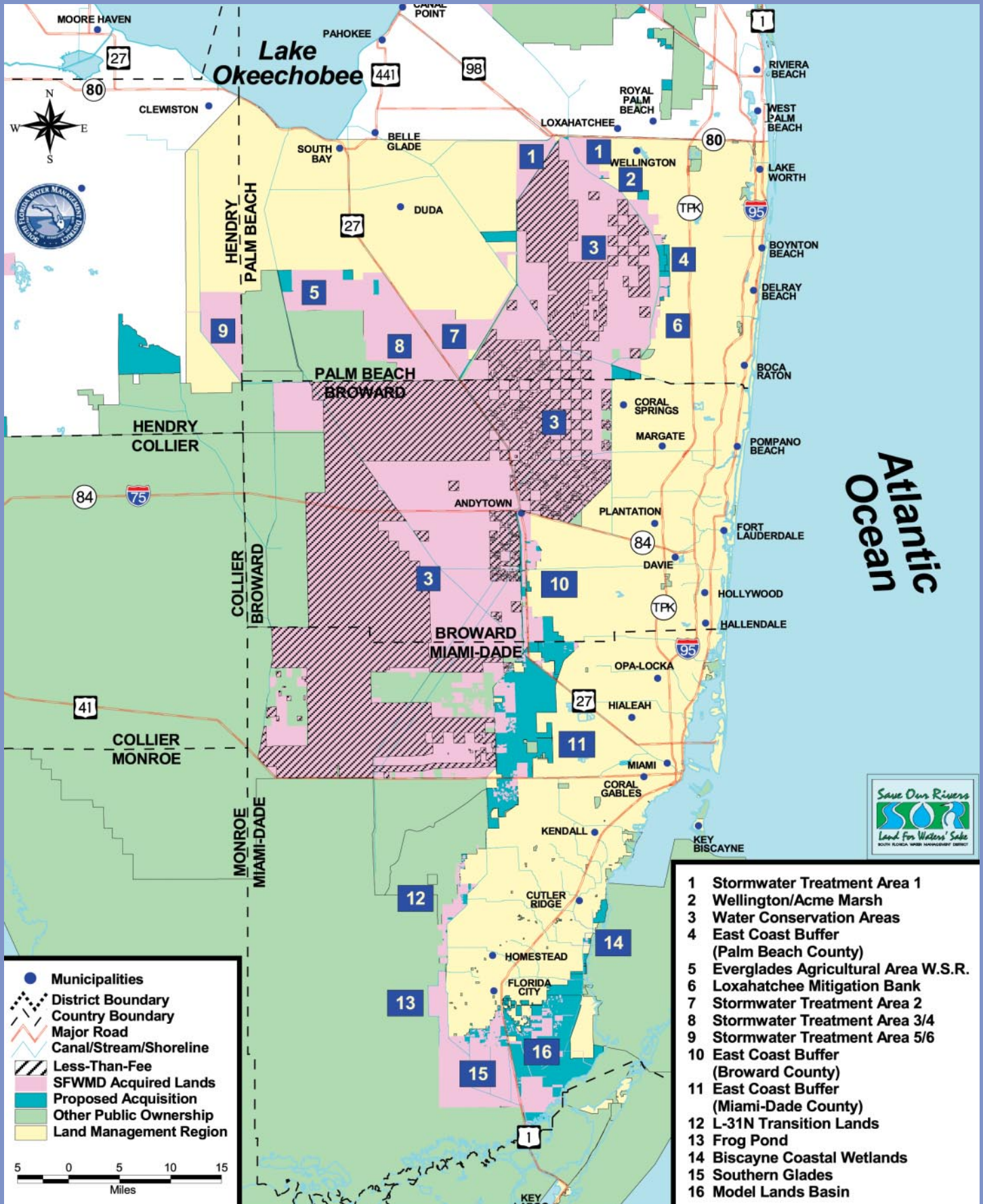
SOR Project Areas

- 1 Tibet-Butler Preserve
- 2 Shingle Creek
- 3 Reedy Creek
- 4 Lake Marion Creek
- 5 Parker-Poinciana
- 6 Catfish Creek
- 7 Kissimmee Chain of Lakes
- 8 Lake Walk-In-Water
- 9 Kissimmee River
- 10 Kissimmee Prairie
- 11 North Savannas
- 12 Indian River Lagoon
- 13 Ten Mile Creek
- 14 North Fork St. Lucie River
- 15 Grassy Island
- 16 Cypress Creek/Trail Ridge
- 17 New Palm Dairy
- 18 Paradise Run
- 19 Allapattah Ranch
- 20 C-44 East S.T.A.
- 21 Atlantic Ridge Ecosystem
- 22 Fisheating Creek
- 23 Nicodemus Slough
- 24 Camayen Ranch
- 25 DuPuis Reserve
- 26 Pal-Mar
- 27 Cypress Creek/Loxahatchee
- 28 Loxahatchee River
- 29 Unit 11
- 30 Loxahatchee Slough
- 31 Caloosahatchee Basin W.S.R.
- 32 Stormwater Treatment Areas
- 33 Wellington/Acme Marsh
- 34 Water Conservation Areas
- 35 Six Mile Cypress I & II
- 36 Okaloacoochee Slough
- 37 East Coast Buffer
- 38 Twelve Mile Slough
- 39 Corkscrew Mitigation Bank
- 40 C.R.E.W.
- 41 Everglades Agricultural Area W.S.R.
- 42 Loxahatchee Mitigation Bank
- 43 Barfield Ranch
- 44 McDaniel Ranch
- 45 L-31N Transition Lands
- 46 Biscayne Coastal Wetlands
- 47 Frog Pond
- 48 Southern Glades
- 49 Model Lands Basin

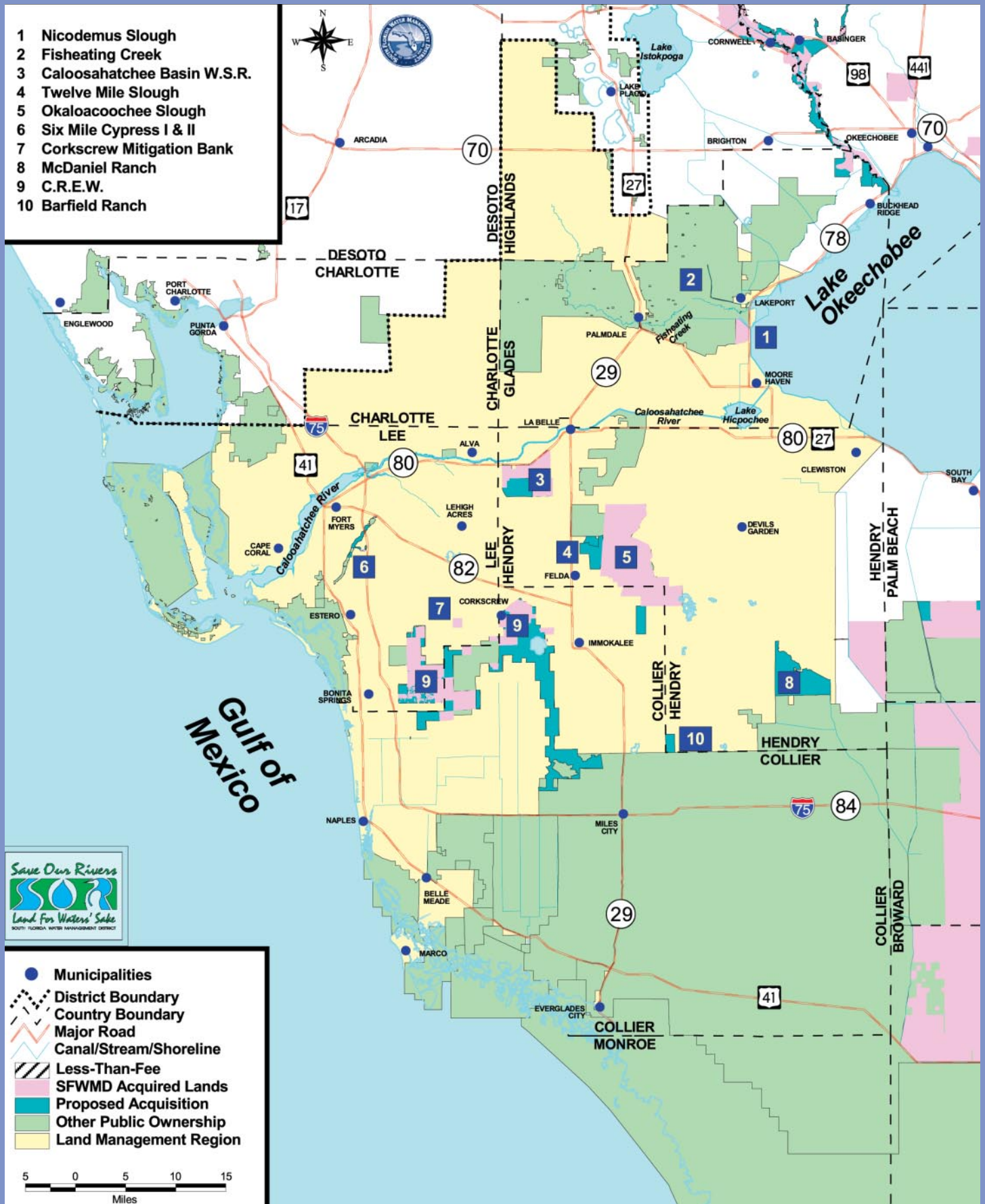
East Coast Land Management Region



Everglades Land Management Region



West Coast Land Management Region



Indian River Lagoon (managed by St. Lucie Co.)

County: St. Lucie/Martin

Project size: 1,550 ac.

District ownership: 598

Acquisition partners: St. Lucie Co., CARL,
Federal govt.

Indian River Lagoon is managed by St. Lucie County under a lease from SFWMD and the Division of State Lands. IRL property is incorporated into the County's mosquito control program where mosquitoes are controlled by non-chemical means. This method results in greatly improved water quality and wildlife and fisheries habitat in the lagoon. Mosquito impoundment berms are accessible to the public and provide excellent opportunities for fishing, crabbing, and bird watching. The property includes ocean beachfront. Plans are under way to remove exotic Australian pines and provide public beach access.

Loxahatchee Mitigation Bank

County: Palm Beach

Project size: 1,256 ac.

District ownership: 1,256

Acquisition partners: None

The Loxahatchee Mitigation Bank site lies adjacent to the Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge. The location of this site will provide habitat connectivity that augments existing Everglades wetland systems. Brazilian pepper and other exotics have degraded the area, adversely impacting native wildlife habitat, including a number of threatened and endangered species.

The goal of the bank is to restore habitat values and provide enhancement of a degraded Everglades ecosystem through hydroperiod restoration, exotic vegetation removal, re-vegetation with desired species, and prescribed burning. Through an open and competitive solicitation process Tetra Tech FW was selected to establish the Loxahatchee Mitigation Bank. Permitting and construction have been completed, exotic enhancements and hydrologic restoration construction activities are ongoing.

Loxahatchee River (managed by Palm Beach Co. and DEP)

County: Palm Beach

Project size: 1,936 ac.

District ownership: 1,926 ac.

Acquisition partners: None

District owned lands along the river are managed by DEP Division of Recreation and Parks and Palm Beach County Parks and Recreation Department. DEP manages the area north of SR 706 (Indiantown Road) as part of Jonathan Dickinson State Park. The county manages the lands south of the road as Riverbend County Park. Both managers have done extensive treatment of exotics. Palm Beach County, in conjunction with the District, is completing hydrologic restoration of its management area in an attempt to restore a major tributary to the Loxahatchee River. The restoration project will enable water to be delivered to the river through a more natural flow way. DEP manages its lands under the Jonathan Dickinson State Park plan. The county has a development plan for Riverbend Park. A management plan will be developed as park development progresses.

Loxahatchee Slough (District managed)

County: Palm Beach

Project size: 1,425 ac.

District ownership: 1,425

Acquisition partners: None

The District is currently managing the property, but a transfer of ownership is underway that will result in Palm Beach County Department of Environmental Resources Management owning and managing the property as part of their much larger Loxahatchee Slough Natural Area. In 2000 the District signed a cooperative agreement with the Natural Resources Conservation Service that provides a 75% funding match for hydrologic restoration of old farm fields under the Wetland Reserve Program. In 2003 ditch plugs were installed to restore hydrologic sheetflow, more than 1,000 acres of exotic vegetation were treated, and 50 acres of former flatwoods were planted with 35,000 south Florida slash pine seedlings.

North Fork St. Lucie River (managed by St. Lucie Co. and DEP Division of Coastal and Aquatic Managed Areas)

County: St. Lucie

Project size: 3,800 ac.

District ownership: 378

Acquisition partners: St. Lucie Co., CARL

State, County, and District-owned lands along the North Fork are being managed by St. Lucie County and DEP, as part of the North Fork Aquatic Preserve. Both agencies are treating exotics and conducting limited prescribed burns. Burning is extremely difficult due to the surrounding urban development. St. Lucie County constructed and operates the Oxbow Eco-center, an environmental education facility along the river in Port St. Lucie, that incorporates indoor displays with outdoor programming that utilizes interpretive trails, towers, and boardwalks.



Display at Oxbow Eco-Center

Pal-Mar (managed by Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission)

County: Palm Beach/Martin

Project size: 36,745 ac.

District ownership: 10,307 ac.

Acquisition partners: CARL

The State and District-owned lands are under management lease to FWC using an approved management plan. Resource inventories are being conducted by FWC and exotic infestations have been mapped. Treatments began in 2002. Prescribed burning began in 2003. The property is open for public use that includes hiking, primitive camping, hunting, and fishing. Bicycling and equestrian trails are also planned. FWC is managing the Martin County lands as the John C. and Mariana Jones Hungryland Wildlife and Environmental Area. A plan is underway to remove spoil and associated exotic vegetation from the canal banks. Associated construction will also provide parking and public access from County Road 711. A plan is under way to sell lands owned by Palm Beach County that are north of SR 706 (Indiantown Road) to the State for management by FWC. Palm Beach County would continue to manage their lands south of Indiantown Road as the Pal-Mar Natural Area.

EVERGLADES LAND MANAGEMENT REGION

Miami Service Center

Model Lands (District managed)

County: Miami-Dade

Project size: 42,402 ac.

District ownership: 4,160 ac.

Acquisition partners: Miami-Dade Co.

The Model Lands project will play a vital role in conveyance and treatment of sheetflow from the south Dade area to Florida Bay. It is a combination of fresh and saltwater wetlands that are heavily infested with exotic vegetation. Although the District owns more than 4,000 acres there is no public use program due to lack of legal access. The major management activity has been treating exotic vegetation. Hydrologic restoration in the form of ditch plugging is necessary, but cannot be undertaken due to patchy ownership and use of the canals for drainage by upstream landowners. No management plan has been prepared, but will begin in 2003.

Southern Glades (managed by Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission)

County: Miami-Dade

Project size: 37,620 ac.

District ownership: 32,299 ac.

Acquisition partners: None

Southern Glades is managed under a lease agreement as the Southern Glades Wildlife and Environmental Area by FWC and is open to airboating, hiking, fishing, hunting, bicycling, and horseback riding. The District is directing mitigation funds for habitat restoration that includes exotic removal and

revegetation with native species. In 2002 a fishing platform was constructed, 1800 acres were prescribe burned, and 150 acres of exotics were chemically treated. Twenty acres of exotic infested canal levee were replanted with native tropical hammock species after chemically treating and mulching the exotics.



Dead exotic plants at Southern Glades

WEST COAST LAND MANAGEMENT REGION

Ft. Myers Service Center

Corkscrew Regional Mitigation Bank

County: Lee

Project size: 633 ac.

District ownership: 633 ac.

Acquisition partners: None

The Corkscrew Regional Mitigation bank is located in southern Lee County, along Corkscrew Road (SR 850). It is adjacent to the Imperial Marsh Stairstep mitigation area, which has been established to offset impacts associated with the Southwest Florida Regional Airport.

The goal of the bank is to improve habitat values and restore the historic function of the upland/wetland mosaic through hydroperiod restoration, exotic vegetation removal, and prescribed burning. The Corkscrew bank site contributes to corridor building and the green infrastructure within the regional context. Mariner Properties Development, selected through an open and competitive solicitation process, is establishing the Corkscrew Regional Mitigation Bank. Permitting for the bank site is in progress.

Corkscrew Regional Ecosystem Watershed (CREW) (District managed)

County: Lee, Collier
Project size: 59,312 ac.
District ownership: 23,370 ac.
Acquisition partners: Lee Co., CARL

SFWMD and Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) jointly manage CREW. The public use and environmental education program is directed by the CREW Land and Water Trust. The management plan was updated in 2002 and describes plans for exotic control, prescribed burning, upland restoration opportunities, and public use. Property boundaries are posted and FWC Wildlife Officers patrol the property. In FY 02 600 acres were prescribed burned and 20,000 acres of exotics were treated. Although the District, State, and Lee County have acquired more than 23,000 acres, only a narrow strip of Corkscrew Marsh along SR 850 is legally accessible. At that location the CREW Trust and SFWMD have developed an interpretive hiking trail and constructed an observation platform that overlooks Corkscrew Marsh. An extensive network of tram roads in Bird Rookery Swamp will provide public use opportunities to more than 6,000 acres of CREW. Legal access was finally obtained in 2002 and plans are being developed to construct an access road that will facilitate public use in 2003. There is one grazing lease on the CREW Management Area.



Barred Owl

Nicodemus Slough (managed by Aim Engineering, Inc.)

County: Glades
Project size: 2,219 ac.
District ownership: 2,219 ac.
Acquisition partners: None

Nicodemus Slough is the only SOR tract under management by a private entity. The District contracts with Aim Engineering, Inc. for management services that include exotic control, prescribed burning, and maintaining the public use facilities. A hydrologic restoration project that was undertaken by the District many years ago has been disappointing and has caused much dissatisfaction with the adjoining property owner. The District has been attempting to reach a suitable agreement with the adjoining landowner whereby the property would be sold to them and a conservation easement retained by the District.

Okaloacoochee Slough (managed by Division of Forestry and FWC)

County: Hendry, Collier
Project size: 37,210 ac.
Public ownership: 34,429 ac.
Acquisition partners: CARL, FWC, DOF

The Division of Forestry (DOF) and FWC purchased additional lands in the project that expand the original District/State purchase. The project is managed as Okaloacoochee Slough State Forest with DOF as the lead manager, and FWC responsible for wildlife management under a 4-party lease agreement with the Division of State Lands and the District. FWC manages the project as a Type 1 wildlife management area and conducts a public hunt program. Exotic treatment, prescribed burning, and creating more public access have been the main management objectives. An approved management plan is in place.

Six Mile Cypress (managed by Lee Co.)

County: Lee
Project size: 1,966 ac.
Public ownership: 854 ac.
Acquisition partners: Lee Co.

The property is jointly owned by Lee County and the District and has been managed by Lee County Parks and Recreation since acquisition began. The management plan was updated in 2002. Treatment of exotic vegetation is ongoing. Prescribed burning is difficult due to the surrounding urban development. The county built and maintains a boardwalk and outdoor classroom facility that is used by 35,000 Lee County students and citizens each year. Six Mile Cypress likely has the highest rate of public visitation of any SOR project.



Gopher Tortoise

**Save Our Rivers
Land Management Summary
Fiscal Year 2002**

Project Name	County	Acres	Acres Aquired	Acquisition Partners	Management FTE's	Expenditures	
						O&M	Restoration
Allapattah Flats	Martin	22,560	13,185	Martin/Federal	0.1	15,400	
Atlantic Ridge Ecosystem	Martin	13,122	5,974	CARL	0.1	15,400	
CREW Mitigation Bank	Lee	633	633	None	0.4	61,600	
CREW	Lee/Collier	58,528	23,370	CARL/Lee Co.	3.5	539,000	230,000
DuPuis	PB/Martin	21,875	21,875	None	5.5	847,000	120,000
Indian River Lagoon	Martin/St. Lucie	1,550	598	St. Luie/CARL/ Federal	0.1	15,400	
Kissimmee Chain of Lakes	Polk/Osceola	33,919	27,844	None	2.0	308,800	
Kissimmee Prairie	Okeechobee	45,631	38,284	CARL	0.2	30,800	
Kissimmee River	Highlands/Okee/ Polk/Osceola	62,628	52,000	None	4.0	616,000	100,000
Lake Marion Creek	Polk	17,300	10,500	Polk County	2	308,000	40,000
Lake Walk-in-Water	Polk	4,109	4,109	Polk County	0.1	15,400	
Loxahatchee River	PB/Martin	1,936	1,926	None	0.4	61,400	300,000
Loxahatchee Slough	Palm Beach	15,200	1,425	None	0.4	61,400	
Model Lands	Miami-Dade	42,402	4,160	Miami-Dade Co.	1.0	154,000	
Nicodemus Slough	Glades	2,219	2,219	None	0.1	15,400	
North Fork St. Lucie River	St. Lucie	3,800	442	St. Lucie Co./ CARL	0.1	15,400	
Okaloacoochee Slough	Hendry/Collier	37,210	34,429	CARL/DOF/FWC	0.1	15,400	
Pal-Mar	PB/Martin	36,745	10,307	CARL	0.4	61,400	
Paradise Run	Glades	4,265	1,673	None	0.1	15,400	
Reedy Creek	Osceola	30,000	4,800	None	2.0	308,000	40,000
Shingle Creek	Orange	7,655	1,500	None	1.3	200,200	
Six Mile Cypress	Lee	1,741	829	Lee County	0.1	15,400	
South Fork St. Lucie River	Martin	184	184	None	0.1	15,400	
Southern Glades	Miami-Dade	37,620	32,299	None	1.0	15,400	500,000
Tilbet-Butler Preserve	Orange	439	439	None	0.1	15,400	
Water Conservation Areas	PB/Brow/Dade	103,635	51,421	None	0.3	46,200	
Administration/Planning	District-wide	N/A	N/A	N/A	2.0	308,000	
	Totals	678,961	346,425		27.5	4,234,400	1,330,000

Public Use Opportunities

Land Management Region	Lead Manager	Public Access	Environ. Education	Hunting	Horseback Riding	Airboating	Camping	Hiking
Upper Lakes Region								
Kissimmee Chain of Lakes	SFWMD	●		●	●	●	●	●
Lake Marion Creek	SFWMD	●		●		●	●	●
Lake Walk-in-Water	Polk County	●					●	●
Reedy Creek	SFWMD	●	●					●
Shingle Creek	SFWMD	●						●
Tibet-Butler Preserve	Orange County	●	●					●
Kissimmee-Okeechobee Region								
Kissimmee Prairie	DEP	●			●		●	●
Kissimmee River	SFWMD	●		●	●	●	●	●
Paradise Run	SFWMD	●		●		●		●
East Coast Region								
Allapattah Flats	SFWMD	none						
Atlantic Ridge	DEP	none						
DuPuis	SFWMD	●	●	●	●		●	●
Indian River Lagoon	St. Lucie County	●						●
Loxahatchee River	DEP	●			●		●	●
Loxahatchee Slough	SFWMD	none						
North Fork St. Lucie River	DEP	●	●					●
Pal-Mar	FWC	●		●			●	
Everglades Region								
Everglades Buffer Strip	SFWMD	●						●
Model Lands	SFWMD	none						
Southern Glades	FWC	●		●	●	●	●	●
West Coast Region								
CREW	SFWMD	●	●	●			●	●
Nicodemus Slough	Aim Engineering, Inc.	●		●		●		●
Okaloacoochee Slough	DOF	●		●	●		●	●
Six Mile Cypress	Lee County	●						●





SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

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